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FORESTRY ON THE FARM

A radio address by George R. Phillips, Division of State Cooperation, U. S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, delivered in the Conservation Day period of the National Farm and Home Hour, September 3, 1937,) and broadcast by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of associated radio stations.

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Farm woodlands are of real significance in our national forestry picture since 185,000,000 acres, or one-third of the country's total forest area, from which comes one-third of the nation's annual wood supply, is situated on about 4-1/2 million farms throughout the United States.

The application of good forestry -- a combination of scientific knowledge and plain horse sense -- in the profitable handling of these woodlands is of definite interest to the nation as a whole and of direct concern to each farmer who owns one. It is also of equal public and individual importance in the reforestation of other portions of farms now cleared but too rough, steep or eroded for any but a tree crop, and of such areas of high-grade land as are needed in the Prairie-Plains and other States for shelterbelts and windbreaks and to produce special forest products such as fence posts.

By good farm forestry we in the Forest Service mean not only the application of proper woods practices in existing woodlands but also the best long time use of all parts of the farm which will grow trees, and which are not well suited for crops or grazing.

The farmer is most concerned about what income he can get from his woodland year after year on a continuous basis. To begin with, to assure himself that he will continue to have a woods with young trees coming on to replace the trees now growing on it, when they are removed, he should see that it is carefully protected from fire and that livestock are kept out of it the year round. Nature has a definite plan for producing seed on and scattering it from existing trees so in the openings there will spring up a yearly crop of young seedlings. If fires are allowed to burn through the woods they kill these little fellows and damage some of the large ones. If livestock are allowed in the woods they browse off most of the small trees, except conifers, and the lower branches of the others. They trample the roots of the larger trees and so injure them.

Both fire and livestock trampling destroy leaves and decaying vegetation accumulated on the surface of the soil. Nature has intended this humus to catch and hold rainwater for future use of tree roots and to feed springs. To give you an idea of how efficiently it works, recent studies in Ohio show that on a 12 percent slope during an entire season there was no loss of either soil or water by surface run-off from a forested plot, while from a similarly situated but cleared and fallowed plot there was a loss of 41 tons of soil per acre and a runoff of 44 percent of all the water that fell upon it. There, incidentally, is a large part of the answer to soil erosion and flood control problems.

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For detailed information on the profitable way to carry on cuttings in your woods, I suggest that you get in touch with your State Forester or your Extension Forester. Conditions vary so greatly in different parts of the country it is impossible to give you properly localized information here. I do wish, however, to mention four basic considerations that should be given careful thought in connection with any cutting. They are:

1. Investigate your market thoroughly before you make any deal - and then sell your timber by the thousand board feet or cord instead of just "lumping" it.
2. Do your own cutting if possible and do not cut your woods too heavily - leave plenty of trees for another cutting in 5 or 10 years on the same area;
3. Cut with the idea of improving the productiveness of your woods - leave trees of the most valuable species that have the best prospects of rapidly growing into higher priced timber;
4. Don't make cuttings over your entire woods any one year -- be satisfied with a reasonable income from part of it each year instead of trying to get a relatively large return all at once.

Most farms have some cleared acreage of steep, rocky, eroded or frequently flooded land that is not suitable for cropping and which is of little value for grazing purposes but which will grow trees. It is good business to make these areas productive by reforesting them.

Livestock is frequently permitted to run in fields through which streams flow so there will be a ready supply of water for them. They don't need the whole creek just to get a drink of water, so it is good planning to fence off a watering place or two for them and plant trees along the remainder of the stream banks. Seedling trees of proper kinds and sizes for plantings of this sort are grown by State Forestry agencies, under cooperative arrangements between the U. S. Forest Service and the States, and may be secured at nominal prices from your State Forester. Now is a good time to plan your needs and get your orders in for shipment later in the fall or in the spring. Often there is real money to be made from such plantings. An unusually successful example is that of J. H. Keely, of near Arcadia, Oklahoma who has derived an average annual income of about \$53 per acre for 20 years from his 12 acre planted woods along the North Canadian River bottom. He grew good fence posts in a locality where there was a demand for his product.

In the Prairie-Plains region there is need for carefully planned protective plantings or shelterbelts about tilled fields, farm buildings and feeding lots to temper the effects of critical hot and cold winds, to conserve moisture and to keep soil from blowing. By devoting 5 to 7 percent of the average farm to properly arranged plantings, the remainder will be reasonably well protected. Such plantings, of course, improve the appearance of farms and provide a nesting place for insect eating birds.

You see, farm forestry has many angles, but they are all practical. If you wish information or assistance on any phase of farm forestry get in touch with your State Forester or your Extension Forester who will be glad to aid, or we will be glad to have you write the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.